Candid CIA, FBI Testimony Sought

Probers Reject 'Monitors'

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SEN. FRANK CHURCH
. . . cites progress

The Senate Committee on Intelligence Operations yesterday rejected an administration attempt to have "monitors" present during closed-door questioning of past and present CIA and FBI employees.

Chairman Frank Church (D-Idaho), said the committee felt such a practice could inhibit witnesses from testifying candidly in the investigation of the government's intelligence network.

"They [the Central Intelligence Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation] wanter somebody to sit in during the preliminary questioning," an aide added later. "The feeling was that this would be disastrous."

Speaking with reporters after an executive session yesterday morning, Church said the committee will start taking sworn testimony next week about CIA covert operations "including the issues raised" by proposed assassinations of foreign leaders.

One of the first witnesses is expected to be CIA Director William E. Colby, who has reportedly acknowledged that there were discussions of assassination within the agency but denied that anything ever came of them. Similar statements have been made by former CIA Director Richard Helms.

Church has called such remarks "correct but not complete." There have been wide-

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CIA, FBI Probe-Monitoring Rejected

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spread allegations of CIA involvement in assassination attempts and schemes aimed at Cuban Premier Fidel Castro and the late Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic.

Church said the proposal to have official representatives sit in and "monitor" the questioning of witnesses came first from the CIA and then the FBI. He described it as a suggestion "by the executive departments," but declined to say whether it originated at the White House.

The proposal seemed reminiscent of the original Watergate investigation when then-White House counsel John W. Dean III sat in on various FBI interviews and attorneys for the Committee for the Re-Election of the President attended others.

It was understood, however, that the agencies involved in the request had been led to think the request might be accepted and were still hoping for permission to send representatives to at least some of the sessions.

Church said the Senate committee voted unanimously to reject the request on the grounds that "there should be no inhibitions or possible inhibitions" in the minds of the witnesses. He said that neither the CIA nor the FBI gave any indication that it wanted to represent the interests of the witnesses themselves rather than those of the agencies.

Under the committee's rules, any witness may bring a lawyer and those unable to obtain counsel may ask the committee to secure an attorney for them. Witnesses will be asked at first to appear voluntarily, but Church added that subpoenas will be issued whenever necessary.

"Before we finish our investigation, we will be calling hundreds of witnesses," he said.

Church said the committee saw no need for CIA-FBI monitors or observers during preliminary interviews by Senate staff members since these will not be transcribed. He said official transcripts will be kept of all sworn testimony and these can be furnished to the agencies involved if the committee approves.

The committee plans to ask the CIA for a full disclosure of all covert operations now under way and a review of past activities since the agency's creation in 1947. Church said the committee was making "reasonable progress" in obtaining pertinent documents from the CIA and other agencies, but more slowly than the committee would like.

In some cases, Church confirmed, the committee is simply taking notes on some CIA documents rather than securing the documents themselves, but he said this does not mean that the committee might not press for the documents later on.